

# **Starting a Youth In Harmony Program**

By: Joshua Oxley

There are roughly 50 chapters in our great district. Would you believe that only 8 festivals have occurred with one pending in 2009? Granted, I will be the first one to tell you that the festival is not the only way to get involved and thus shouldn't be the only way to measure it. Several other chapters provided scholarships to the HX camp and others made presentations in local schools. All that accounted for, my best estimate still has us at less than 50% participation as a district.

Want to get your chapter started? I'll tell you how to succeed by simultaneously revealing the three steps that most chapters try to skip.

**STEP 1: REALIZE THE GOAL.** The goal of the YIH program shouldn't be about membership or even specifically barbershop, although that is the medium we will use to reach kids. Our goal is simply to create and nurture interest in singing among young men. YIH programs are better likened to good marketing, as it creates a positive image in the community but will not directly lead to membership gains. But, remember that often great marketing WILL lead to membership gains.

**STEP 2: IDENTIFY YOUR RESOURCES.** What can you realistically put towards your YIH effort? Is it money? Is it time? Is it sheet music? Is it man power? Is it just yourself? List your available resources and helpers and see what type of projects are within your scope (Use the 7 tiers diagram from the district website).

**STEP 3: CULTIVATE RELATIONSHIPS.** Your success often depends on your patience, dedication, and WHO YOU KNOW. Start out by doing things to get on friendly terms with the choral teachers. Attend concerts, help them with fund raisers, donate music, make an in-school presentation, help build sets for musicals, or ask a high school choir to sing on your show. Be creative. You know your situation best. There must be thousands of yet to be discovered ways to get your foot in the door.

**STEP 4: EXECUTE YOUR PLAN.** This is usually where people start and that is why this is often so difficult. It is always easier to play to your strengths and work your way through the first three steps toward your ultimate goals of running a festival or helping to create a youth barbershop chorus or something else.

Let me know what you're doing out there.

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